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(HOW THE STUDY OF HISTORY
IS LET AND HINDERED.)

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AN ADDRESS, DELIVERED IN THE LIVERPOOL INSTITUTE

ON NOVEMBER, 1879,

By EDWARD A. FREEMAN, D.C.L., LL.D.



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HOW THE STUDY OF HISTORY IS LET AND HINDERED.

WE live in a land of precedent, where the first question to be asked before doing anything is whether it has ever been done before. Indeed I believe that there are still some left who cleave to the old faith that there is something in the wisdom of our forefathers, and that the right thing is to stand fast in the old paths. Belonging myself to that old-fashioned sect, dreading nothing so much as the change of novelty, before I ventured to open my mouth before the Liverpool Institute, I made it my business to learn something of the traditions and precedents of the place, and to find out what had been said by others who had opened their mouths here before me. I have been able to read the addresses which have been delivered here by two statesmen who are also scholars, and by one great scholar whom all who cleave to old things and eschew new will be glad to see numbered in the ranks of statesmen. I have read the addresses of Mr. Goschen, of Mr. Grant Duff, and of Mr. Bryce; and I am glad to find in them a certain old-world freedom, a wide choice of subjects, a wide choice in the treatment of subjects, a good deal of licence even in the utterance

of positive opinions on controverted points. Mr. Grant Duff even goes so far as to set a precedent of finding fault with many things, general and particular. This I hold to be a very wholesome precedent, and one which exactly approves itself to my standard. The right of finding fault, especially with the powers that be, is a right of very ancient date, one which has been freely exercised by Englishmen from the earliest times. There can be no surer sign of an innovator, of one with whom the wisdom of our forefathers goes for nothing, than when any one tries to set metes and bounds to this Old-English right, the right of what we Old-English folk call grumbling, but which I believe in the high-polite style is called vituperation. Not being myself a master of the high-polite style, I cannot judge whether Mr. Grant Duff vituperates; but he certainly grumbles, perhaps he even denounces. I say this only in order that, in case I should, before I have done, claim to exercise this divine right of grumbling, you may see that I have a good precedent, even in the annals of the Liverpool Institute. But the great lesson which I have learned from the addresses of my three distinguished predecessors is a very cheering one, namely, that he who is called on to give away prizes at the Liverpool Institute may, without any breach of ancient order, talk about almost any subject that he chooses. This is specially cheering to me, as I should be quite unable to say anything on some of the subjects on which my predecessors have touched. I could hardly follow Mr. Grant Duff into the details of Higher and Secondary Education, nor could I follow Mr. Bryce into the details of Education for Men of Business. Alas, I know nothing about business; I never can add up my

own small private accounts right. Higher and Secondary Education are names which have come up since my school and college days, and I am not sure that I know which is higher and which is secondary. Yet, notwithstanding their somewhat formidable names, I have picked up some very useful points, both from Mr. Grant Duff's address and from Mr. Bryce's. But I am perhaps more at home with Mr. Goschen and the Imagination. I am quite sure that, without imagination, it would be very poor work in all branches of life. If I may venture to glance at such unknown regions, I could fancy that a little imagination might be useful even in education, even in business. I am quite sure that Mr. Goschen is right when he maintains that imagination is needful in study and needful in politics. He draws a gloomy picture of a Parliament without imagination. It is not for me, who have never sat in Parliament, to say whether that picture was taken from the life. Perhaps it was, by Mr. Goschen's own power of imagination, drawn, not from anything that now is, but from the Unlearned or the Addle Parliament of past times. Let no one add the Parliament of Bats, as that was called, not from the bat-like dulness of its members, but from the bats or bludgeons—we still speak of cricket-bats—which the followers of the members carried. But it is quite certain that neither past history nor present politics—and always remember that history is only past politics, that politics are only present history—can be understood without making, as Mr. Goschen teaches us, a large exercise of imagination. Large, I must add, but, as in all other things, not too large. In dealing alike with the present and with the past, we need so much exercise of imagination as will make us see clearly the things that are; we must beware of that too bold exercise of

imagination which makes so many people see the things which are not. It is not the chastened and practical imagination dwelled upon by Mr. Goschen, but the "forward delusive faculty" denounced by Bishop Butler, which sometimes enables men in the affairs of the present to shut their eyes to the things which are close under their noses, and to see things which are, to say the least, very far beyond the horizon. So again it sometimes enables men, in the affairs of the past, to shut their eyes to the facts set down in the book which is lying open before them, and to write instead a pretty and touching story, to which the only objection is the small objection of pedantry that the facts set down in it never happened.

Let me then take up to some extent Mr. Goschen's parable, and say something as to what seems to be the legitimate field of imagination with regard to certain branches of study, those about which alone I have any right to say anything at all. By imagination, in Mr. Goschen's sense, I understand the power of calling up before the mind's eye any given state of things, any place, person, or event, past or present. Without such a power, any form of historical research becomes a mere matter of words and names, a matter of dry bones with no life in them. You must all of you know what differences there may be in the way of telling the same story, how differently the tale comes home to you when it is so told as to call up a real and living idea, and when it is left with no more life in it than an entry in an index or a chronological table. People will sometimes say that such and such a subject is "dry." I have known history, as a whole, pronounced to be "dry;" more commonly do we find some of the cognate branches of knowledge

pronounced to be "dry." Geography, for instance, is dry; grammar is dry. And dry enough they doubtless are, as they are very often taught and learned; but, if so, it is mainly owing to lack of imagination on the part either of the teacher or of the learner. And I should be inclined to say that this lack of imagination is much oftener the fault of the teacher than of the learner. Lord Palmerston, it may be remembered, held that all children were born good. Without discussing that point, which might lead us into controversial theology, I have sometimes been tempted to believe that all children are born clever, but that many of them are made stupid by bad teaching. And this badness of teaching largely consists in loading the child's memory without ever appealing to his imagination. He is overwhelmed with words and names, without being taught to attach any ideas to the words and names. The chosen few, who can strike out ideas for themselves, live through the process; they learn, not so much through their teaching, as in spite of their teaching. But that large class who are not able to strike out ideas for themselves, but who are quite able to take in ideas when they are set before them, do intellectually perish under the ordinary process of teaching. What is drearier than a geography book, except a book of grammar? What is drearier than a book of grammar, except a geography book? A child is set to learn a heap of words, names, rules, examples, as a mere matter of memory; but the imagination is not appealed to in order to throw life into words, names, rules, examples. I have known children, living in a picturesque and strongly-marked country, a land of hills and dales, of rivers, inland seas, and islands, who knew the definition of an island and a promontory in the geography-

book, but who had never connected the name and the definition with the thing itself, who daily looked out on islands and promontories without knowing that they were islands and promontories. They knew the countries of Europe and their capitals; they knew the place of London on the map; but they could not point to the quarter of the heavens under which London lay. Preternaturally stupid children they must have been, some one will say. I answer, not at all preternaturally stupid children, simply average children, children who, like most other children, were not capable of striking out ideas for themselves, but who were quite capable of taking in ideas when they were set before them. Only nobody had ever set the ideas before them; they were taught the names, but not the things, even though the things lay close under their own eyes; in other words, their imagination had never been cultivated. I remember hearing how a child who had learned some very simple matter by rote over and over again had the same matter at last explained to him in a life-like way. The new teaching was taken in, but it was taken in as something wholly new. "Did you never learn that before?" was the natural question. "O yes, I *learned* it, but I never *knew* it before." That the name and the thing had any connexion, that the dull drudgery of so-called learning had anything to do with the living delight of knowing, had not before come into the child's head. Such a child doubtless knew many things, but they were things of his own finding out, not things which he had been kept from knowing by being set to learn them. Learning without knowing is in truth simply learning without any attempt to call the imagination into play. What if the faculty does in some measure now and then deserve Bishop Butler's two

epithets? There are stages when even a wrong idea is better than no idea at all. I have always respected the child who, being asked in a geography lesson, "Where is Turkey?" answered, "In the yard with the poultry. Here the name distinctly conveyed an idea; it was perhaps the one name in the whole lesson which did convey one. France, Germany, Italy, a hundred other names, had been learned after a sort which conveyed no knowledge, which answered to nothing in the child's range of thought. At last a word came which had a meaning; the active mind of the child caught at it. The question put had at last come within the child's range of ideas; things and names were no longer divorced; the imagination was at last called into play. France, Germany, Italy, might lie to such and such points of the compass, within such and such lines of latitude and longitude. All this had merely been learned, but the name Turkey answered to a thing that was known. The other names might be anywhere, in no man's land or at the back of beyond. But there was no doubt about that one name; Turkey was in the yard with the poultry. I have no doubt that that child was scolded and sent to the bottom of the class. He—or rather she; for I doubt whether a boy would be so sharp—ought at once to have been sent to the top as a credit to the whole school.

It is, in short, only by an effort of the imagination that we clothe the words which we use with any meaning. And the difference between good teaching and bad mainly consists in this—whether the words used are really clothed with a meaning or not. The difference between accuracy and inaccuracy, very often the difference between truth and falsehood, largely consists in meaning what we say and in

saying what we mean. Have we, or have we not, a clear and definite idea attached to every word which we use? Does every word call up some distinct image? If it does not, we are not speaking clearly, we are not speaking accurately; in fact, we are not speaking truthfully. We may not be purposely saying anything that is false; but we are not taking all the pains that we ought to say what is true. I do not hesitate to say that the cultivation of the imagination, in Mr. Goschen's sense, is a moral duty. A large part of the mistakes which are done in the world might be avoided by the right use of the imagination, as another large part are caused by its wrong use. The princess who asked why, if the people had no bread, they did not eat buns, was not hard-hearted; she merely lacked imagination. If I remember the story rightly, when her imagination was once appealed to, when the real state of the case was set before her, she began to do something to relieve the distress of which she had before had no idea. The great rule of sound knowledge is, Never be satisfied to use words, unless you are sure that every word has an idea answering to it. And it is only by exercising the imagination in its fitting place and order, by using it and at the same time keeping it from being forward and delusive, that we can be always sure of having ideas answering to our words.

Now, I conceive that I shall not be altogether wandering away from earlier precedents if I give my discourse a character which is in some sort desultory. I had no purpose when I began of talking about the imagination at all. I was simply set on that track by Mr. Goschen. I must draw in somewhat, and, without putting the imagination altogether

out of sight, I must say something more directly about those branches of study which I ought to make, and mean to make, my main subject this evening. As I can tell you nothing about business, nothing about higher and secondary education, so I can tell you nothing about physical science. I cannot tell you the best way to learn it, because I know nothing about it myself. I believe that it is now-a-days thought very discreditable to confess that there is anything that one does not know, at all events, to confess that there is any kind of knowledge which is quite beyond one's faculties. And it is deemed specially discreditable to know nothing of physical science. But I belong to a more old-fashioned school, a school whose members are used to find a great many things which they do not know, a great many things which they have no chance of ever knowing, a great many things which lie wholly beyond their faculties. And the members of that school, while they are not ashamed to confess that there are many things which they do not know, are also ready to allow that the things which they do not know may be equally worth knowing with those which they do know. They do not, like some more lively geniuses, at once infer that, if there is anything that they do not know, it cannot be worth knowing. They feel that life is too short, that their own faculties are too small, to allow them to learn everything; they believe in the doctrine of division of labour; they hold that it is enough if they themselves know certain things, and if some other people know some other things. And they also feel the most genuine respect for the people who know the things which they do not know, a respect which they are sometimes inclined to think—it may be only the weakness of human nature which makes them think so—

is not always returned. I do not think that any master of history or language ever spoke contemptuously of the study of natural science; I think that I have known masters of natural science—perhaps they only seemed to be masters of it—who spoke contemptuously of the study of history and language. Let me, by the way, warn my younger hearers, who wish to have some subject of study, but who may not have chosen their subject of study. Choose, I would say to them, that branch of study to which your natural bent leads you. Choose it, and stick to it; make yourselves masters of it, and, if you are masters of it, do not be ashamed because you are not masters of something else. But if, without neglecting your own subject, you can, by the way, learn something of any other subject, by all means do so. There is no kind of real knowledge, however small, provided it be real knowledge as far as it goes, of any subject, which may not, sooner or later, be found to be some use for the study of some other subject. Most likely, in choosing your subject, in looking out for your real subject, you may not at the first attempt find out what your real subject is. You may try two or three subjects before you hit on the right one. There is no harm in this. If, in so doing, you learn a little of two or three subjects besides your main subject, it is a gain. The knowledge so gained may be little, very little; but, however little it may be, if it be real knowledge as far as it goes, you will find it worth having in itself, and it is almost sure, sooner or later, to help you in some way with your main subject. Let me tell you my own case. I tried several subjects before I settled down to the main work of my life. Amongst others, I tried natural history; I tried Semitic languages. I learned

a little of each. I have not carried on those studies ; I am not up to the latest lights in either of them. But I do feel that I know something, though only a very little, about both. Those subjects are not to me the utter blackness of darkness which some other subjects are. And I find that this is a gain, both in itself, and as ever and anon in a chance way helping my main subjects. It is a wise rule that a man should, if he can, know something of everything and everything of something. Only, if the two objects clash, the something of everything must give way to the everything of something. And let no man allow the very practical attempt to know everything of something to degenerate into the utterly vain attempt to know everything of everything. No one who at once cultivates his imagination and keeps the forward delusive faculty within due bounds, will ever dream of knowing everything of everything. Aristotle perhaps could know everything of everything that was known in his time. And I must grant to Mr. Lowe that, in so knowing, Aristotle knew much less of many things than very ignorant people know now. But I maintain, on the other hand, that Aristotle, by knowing all that could be known of all subjects, however little that knowledge was, reached a higher intellectual level than any man can reach now. But we cannot be as Aristotle. We cannot reap the advantages of two different states of things at once. We must cut our coat according to our cloth. We live in a time when the vast widening of the range of knowledge makes universal knowledge impossible. The knowledge of the best of us must be partial. It cannot reach beyond something of everything and everything of something. If it strives to reach the impossible goal of everything of everything, it

may end by finding itself at the very possible goal of—nothing of anything.

And now for a word more directly bearing on the special branches of study of which I wish to speak, those of History and Language. I put these as two separate branches of study, because from some points of view they are so, although it is quite impossible to keep them asunder in practice. You cannot have any worthy knowledge of the history of any people without knowing something about their language. I do not say that you need be able to speak or write or even to read that language. If you can do so, all the better. In the case of a people whose history you make a matter of minute study, you must know their language. But you may gain a knowledge of the history of any people, which knowledge will be quite enough for many purposes, without knowing their language. By knowing about a language as distinguished from knowing a language, I mean having a clear view of the history of that language and its relations to other languages. So again, you cannot have a worthy knowledge of any language without a very considerable knowledge of the history of the people who use or have used that language. Thus the study of history and the study of language have a large field in common. Yet the two studies are not the same. Each looks at things from its own point of view. The man whose primary study is political history must learn a great deal about language; still he need only learn language so far as it bears on political history; the professed philologist has beyond that a wide range of his own into which the political historian, as such, need not follow him. So again, the man whose primary study is language

must learn a great deal about political history ; still he need only learn political history so far as it bears on language ; the political historian has beyond that a wide range of his own into which the philologist, as such, need not enter. The philologist, as such, cares for all languages ; the tongue of the Zulu or the Cherokee may illustrate some point in his science as well or better than the tongue of the Greek or the German. The political historian cares only for those languages which bear upon those parts of history which he studies. The historian of any European country must really know the language or languages of the country with which he deals, and of those countries which have directly affected that country. Of other European, and, in some cases we must add of some Asiatic, languages, he must know at least so much as to know their true relations to one another. But with the tongues of the Zulus and the Cherokees, profoundly interesting as they are to the philologist as such, he need not trouble himself at all. There may be some here whose bent may lead them to political history as their main study. They must be prepared to give a very considerable degree of attention to the study of language ; they must learn to a great extent the same things as the professed philologist, though they will learn them with objects somewhat different from his. And they will also draw back and decline to follow him into some regions into which he will most naturally and fittingly go on. So there may be some here whose bent may lead them to language as their main study. They must be prepared to give a very considerable degree of attention to political history ; they must learn to a great extent the same things which the political historian learns ; but they will not learn them with exactly the same objects ; and he will have

regions of his own into which they may decline to follow him. The succession of races in a country, the nomenclature of the land and its people, the nomenclature of its early institutions, the changes in its language or languages, are all matters which concern the historian and the philologist alike. But I do not know that the philologist need master every detail in the parliamentary and judicial systems of every people with whose language he concerns himself; and the political historian may make a very practical use of the languages with which he has to deal, without being able to trace every word in their vocabulary through all its cognates in every kindred language. A master of English history must be master of English, Latin, and French; and mastery of English implies knowledge of German. Welsh will be good for him; Greek will not hurt him; the more Teutonic and Romance dialects he knows the better. But of the other tongues which are or have been spoken in Europe, he need not at the outside know more than so much as will lead him to put them in their right relations to one another. He may do perfectly well without understanding a single Slavonic, Arabic, Turkish, Finnish, or Mongolian sentence. But he should at least know enough to keep himself from thinking it clever to say that, if you scratch a Russian, you find a Tartar.

We must then distinguish the study of history and the study of language as being in themselves two distinct studies. And yet we see that they have so much in common that, for many purposes, we may place them together as distinguished from other studies. I would put it thus. While it is good that he who knows everything of something should also know something of everything, he who knows everything of history must know more than something of language. Or, as no man

can know everything either of history or of language, as he can never be thoroughly master of more than parts of either subject, we may put it more practically thus. He who tries to know everything about some branch of history or some branch of language, must know more than something, he must know a good deal, of those branches of the other subject which illustrate his one special study. With me, for my own purposes, to-night or any other time, history comes first in idea and language second. But then, as part of the study of the history of any time or people, I understand the study of those languages without a study of which the history of that time or people cannot be worthily understood.

And now here comes a very practical question. There may very likely be some who have chosen some subject other than history or language as the something about which they would fain, as far as in them lies, know everything, but who still count history and language as part of the everything of which they would fain know something. Is it possible, such an one may ask, to get a little knowledge of history or language, a little, perhaps a very little, knowledge, but a knowledge which, however little, shall be real as far as it goes? I can only say that I see no abstract reason why they should not, but that, as a matter of fact, people very seldom do. There are some subjects on which it seems to be quite possible to know a little, a very little, and yet for that very little to be real knowledge as far as it goes. I speak with fear and trembling; but I conceive that everybody knows a little astronomy. Indeed I believe that I know a little astronomy myself. When I said that I knew nothing of natural science, I did not mean you to think that I was not fully aware that the earth goes round the sun, that certain

other planets do the same, that some of them have moons going round them, that an eclipse of the sun is caused by the shadow of the moon, and a few more acknowledged truths of that kind. Indeed, when I was a lad, I could draw the solar system, as it then stood. And if I cannot do so now, it is only because of late years the solar system has grown at a rate which is perfectly baffling to terrestrial minds. It seems to be always annexing something, just like the British and Russian empires. As I, a mere parochial European, find it hard to keep up with the last changes in the map at Khokand or in the Transvaal; so, as a mere walker on this earth, I find it hard to keep up with Demothoe or Hegesistrate, or whatever may be the name of the last found, last created, or last evolved, asteroid. I believe then that I know a little astronomy, though only a very little, and that my astronomy, though it goes only a very little way, is right as far as it goes. But I seldom fall in with people who seem to have exactly the same kind of knowledge as this of history or language. I seldom or never find that those who have not really studied those subjects—as I have not really studied astronomy—have this small kind of knowledge, small, but still correct in its small way. I must indeed except the well-known rining History of England, which gives accounts of the kings since the Norman Conquest, often very inadequate, but I think always accurate as far as they go. To tell us that “Harry the Eighth was as fat as a pig,” is certainly by no means an exhaustive account of so memorable a reign; but this statement has the advantage over some more elaborate pictures that, as far as it goes, it cannot be gainsaid. But, as a rule, those who have not studied history or language

scientifically have not reached this stage. They believe that the English people are Israelites; they believe that Alfred founded University College, and perhaps Trial by Jury to boot; they think that the German language is closely akin to the Hebrew, and that the vocabulary of the English language is mainly Welsh. That is to say, they are not on the same level as my little bit of astronomical knowledge, but on the level of those who hold that the earth is flat, and that the sun is only three miles from it. But herein comes an important practical difference. The harmless lunatic in matters of astronomy is dealt with by all men as a harmless lunatic; he gets no following; though he claims the right of every man to his own opinion, no one is inclined to listen to his opinion. But the harmless lunatic in matters of history and language is very far from being harmless, because people do not see that he is a lunatic. He gets a hearing; he gets a following; his talk is treated respectfully as matter of opinion, matter of controversy. Anglo-Israel has a large literature; I have seen a whole shop in London full of its writings, a fact which seems to imply that the Anglo-Israelites are a sect both numerous and zealous. I cannot think that those who think that the earth is flat would be able to make so goodly a show. Now, believe me—the request is perhaps not unreasonable; I believe the astronomer—the doctrines of Anglo-Israel and other doctrines of the same kind are simply on a level with the doctrines of those who hold that the earth is flat. Or rather they are on a lower level. The error of the man who believes that the earth is flat has some excuse, some temptation. It consists in a man trusting the supposed evidence of his own senses, rather than the teaching of men who understand the matter

better than himself. Unless men who had made astronomy a special study had taught us otherwise, we should all have believed that the earth was flat. There seems no such natural temptation to make anybody think that the English people are Israelites; the notion not only contradicts all reason, all evidence; it is in itself something strange and abnormal, like the taste of the girl in the *Spectator* who ate up her grandfather's clay pipes. The Welsh craze is not quite so amazing as the Hebrew craze; one can see how it came into people's heads. But, believe me, or if you will not believe me, believe Professor Earle or Professor Müller, that he who teaches you that the vocabulary of the English tongue is mainly Welsh, stands, as regards masters of the science of language, exactly in the same position in which the man who teaches you that the sun is only three miles from the earth stands with regard to the masters of the science of astronomy.

Now to what is this difference owing? Why is it that some measure of knowledge of astronomy—and, doubtless, of other branches of natural science also—is so much more generally spread abroad than the same kind of knowledge of history and language? There seem to be two reasons working together. One is in the nature of the two kinds of study. The study of history and the study of language seem to be—and in truth, in a certain sense, these are—so much more open to every man to take up for himself than astronomy and the other natural sciences. There is a sense in which everybody must know something of history and something of language. The worst-informed person can hardly be altogether without some knowledge, or something which passes for knowledge, of past events. I once passed in a hired carriage by a house in

Wiltshire, which my driver pointed out as "the house where Oliver Cromwell used to usurp." Here we have a knowledge of past events of a somewhat vague and inadequate kind; still there is a certain knowledge of past events. The man knew that there once was such a man as Oliver Cromwell, and he further connected, however confusedly, the name of Oliver Cromwell with some act or other of an irregular kind. So with language. A man cannot well help knowing his own language; a man of any kind of education will know some other language as well. Now, unless he is very stupid indeed, he will make some kind of comparison between the two languages; if he is reasonably observant and thoughtful, he may very likely work out a great piece of Grimm's Law for himself. In the study of history, above all, the student seems to be, and in a certain sense he is, less dependent on teachers than in any other kind of study. History is the least technical of all studies; it has absolutely no technical terms. A man who begins to read the history of any people will doubtless find in his book some words which he never saw before, and of which he will have to ask the meaning. But these are not technical terms of history as a study; they are technical terms of law, warfare, theology, natural science itself, of any subject in short which the historian's tale may lead him to speak of. Or very likely they are strictly not technical terms at all, but simply words of some other age or people, which are no longer in use, but which, in the age and among the people to which they belong, were understood by everybody. He who opens a book of Roman history may have to ask what is meant by the *imperium* of the consul and the *potestas* of the tribune. He who opens a book of Old-English history may have to ask what is meant by *bookland*

and *folkland*. But these are not technical terms of history; they are hardly technical terms at all; they are names which are now forgotten, but which were understood, not only by a particular class but by everybody, in the days when the things which they express were in being. Every Roman of the days of the commonwealth knew the difference between *imperium* and *potestas* as naturally as every Englishman now knows the difference between Lords and Commons. Every Englishman a thousand years back knew the difference between *bookland* and *folkland* as naturally as every Englishman now knows the difference between freehold and leasehold. Of technical terms like the technical terms of natural science, words arbitrarily invented for the purposes of science and which never formed part of the ordinary language of any time or place, history has absolutely none. There is, naturally and reasonably, something very inviting in this absence of technicalities in historical study; its danger is that it sometimes leads men, not to the study of history, but to the belief that history may be mastered without study. It is plain at the first glance that no branch of natural science can be mastered without a great deal of hard work, without putting a great deal of confidence in the teacher, without learning a great number of technical terms. The thing is, on the face of it, work, while history has a deceptive appearance of being play. It looks as if one man were as fit to deal with it as another. And so men rush at it, without experience, without that critical tact which comes of experience, without distinguishing between original authorities and their modern commentators, without distinguishing the differences in value between one original authority and another, while the modern commentators meanwhile are judged by some

standard very different from that of historic truth. It is in history alone that people deliberately prefer the pretty story to the true story. It is in history alone that men say openly that it does not matter whether the modern writer gives us the actual facts of his science or puts in their stead something wholly of his own devising. The geometers do not do so; the astronomers do not do so; the chemists do not do so; among them an impostor cannot pass himself off as an expert. It is a prettier story to believe that the sun dances for joy on Easter-day than to believe that he obeys the laws of gravitation on all days. But he who should set forth the pretty story now would hardly win the reputation of a scientific astronomer. Yet a man may put forth things on history or language quite as far from the world of fact as the tale of the sun dancing on Easter-day, and he may nevertheless get a following who will look upon him as a master, and who will deem it impertinence, if not sacrilege, to call his statements in question.

I have said that there were two causes for the way in which historical error wins for itself a standing-ground so much more easily than error on other subjects. But perhaps my second cause is not to be reckoned as a separate cause, but rather as a necessary result of the first. It is because history is so untechnical a subject, a subject so open to all, a subject seemingly so easy, a subject on which everybody can talk and write and form an opinion, that the way in which it is commonly taught is so insufferably bad. Everybody thinks himself able to write history, especially the most difficult form of all history, English history for beginners. I cannot believe that there are any children's books on astronomy so bad as some of the children's books on history. For, to be

as bad, they must at least say that the sun goes round the earth. Or rather you might say that the sun goes round the earth and be a great deal better than many of the children's books on history. There is really something to be said for the doctrine that the sun goes round the earth. First of all, right or wrong, it is an intelligible proposition ; it has a meaning ; you can say Yea or Nay to it. Secondly, it is what everybody would think if he were not taught better ; it is what all mankind thought for many ages ; it is what the wisest of men thought a few centuries back ; it is what I doubt not that the vast numerical majority of mankind think still. A doctrine which has so much to be said for it as this is respectable compared with the kind of rubbish which one sometimes reads about the history of our own country. When we read, as I have read in a book, not only that Cæsar invaded *England*, but that he was withstood by "the English people, who were then called the Britons," we have hardly reached the dignity either of falsehood or of blundering ; one can hardly say that there is any intelligible proposition to which one can answer Nay any more than Yea. The whole thing is mere confusion and gibberish. So I have known people confound British Arthur and English Alfred ; I have read in a book written by one who thought himself a great scholar that Pope Gregory the Great encouraged William the Conqueror to the invasion of England ; above all, I have both heard with my ears and read in a book that, when Caractæus and his family were brought before Claudius, the Emperor was so struck with their beauty that he said that they were "non Angli sed angeli." This last does indeed reach the dignity of a blunder, and of a blunder of the first rank. I have indeed kept it by me as the tip-top, the roof and crown, of all

blunders. It is a blunder which, like all good blunders, only a clever man could make. For bear in mind that a blunder is a work of art. An utterly stupid man, an utterly ignorant man, may make dull mistakes and dull confusions ; he cannot make a good blunder. To make a good blunder needs cleverness, and it needs knowledge—imperfect knowledge certainly, but still some knowledge, not utter ignorance. If I who speak to you now were fool enough to talk about chemistry, I might say something exceedingly wrong and exceedingly silly ; but I could not make a good chemical blunder, because I do not know enough about chemistry to make one. I might make a Hebrew blunder or a zoological blunder, because I believe that I know enough of Hebrew and of zoology to blunder in them. But because such a blunder as I quoted could have been made only by a clever man, it shows all the more how very badly people must be taught the history of their own country when even a clever man could have had his head in so confused a state as to make such a blunder. It is all part of our amazing habit of turning our backs upon ourselves and making ourselves out to be anybody else except ourselves. Just bear in mind that, if Caesar invaded England and was withstood by the English people, he must needs have gone to the Elbe or thereabouts to look for them, and all will be well.

And now that I have got thus far, having begun on the shoulders of Mr. Goschen, let me now put on the mantle of Mr. Grant Duff. Let me do a little vituperation, or, in lowlier English, a little grumbling, perhaps even a little name-calling. I have looked through the courses of reading in your High School and your Queen's College. I do not feel called on to

be quite so fierce against your scheme as Mr. Grant Duff was; for I find one entry which is admirably fitted to turn away wrath in my particular case. I see that two forms in the High School read "Freeman's General Sketch of European History." I look on that arrangement as a wise one. On the one hand I believe that it may do a certain amount of good in spreading what I believe to be correct views among the youth of Liverpool; and I feel on the other hand that a certain amount of royalty must pass yearly from Liverpool to Bedford-street, Covent Garden, and thence to Somerleaze, Wells. So far so good, as concerns the upper fourth and lower fifth forms, but how about the lower third, upper third, and lower fourth? I have a special concern for the lower third form, poor little souls. I see that they read "English history—the Roman, Saxon, Norman, and Plantagenet periods." What are these periods? Who defines them? In what books are they read about? Somehow they have about them a certain savour of "the English people who were then called the Britons." * Then I see that the Queen's College reads—one has to gather up one's little breath for the effort—the Student's Hume! Fancy a live Student's Hume really read in the year 1879, nearly at the end of the year. There is a sound proverb which says that you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, and no editing or sub-editing, no docking and mangling and scratching in

* I am bound to add that it is the description and not the fact which is to blame. I have since learned that under the guise of "English History—Roman, Saxon, Norman, and Plantagenet periods," lies hidden the very book which I should have most recommended for the lower forms. But if the High School will wrap its sheep in wolf's clothing, and if I have no chance of hearing them bleat, how can I tell that they are sheep and not wolves?

and scratching out can turn David Hume's romance into a true history. You may, by taking all the life out of it as a romance, make it into something which shall not be wrong; you can never make it into a thing which shall be really right. So I see in the matter of language that you read M'Leod and Morell and Angus, whoever M'Leod and Morell and Angus may be. I dare say I have seen them all; I have seen crowds of books of the kind; for books of that kind be legion. I can no more remember them all than I can remember all the men whom I have helped to pluck at Oxford, or all the men whom I have helped to send to prison at Wells. But after a while I do see a better name; I see the best of all names for teaching the English child his own tongue; I see that, after a certain stage of Angus or Morell or something, Dr. Morris is read. But is it fair to the learner, is it fair to Dr. Morris, to put off reading him till something else has been read first? Is it wise, before you come to what is really good to be learned, to thrust in something which can be learned only in order to be unlearned? Is it fair to the field out of which you wish to raise a crop of wheat to play with your own hands the part of the enemy, and to prepare the ground for the wheat by a careful sowing of tares? No; teach your English child from the beginning that he is, like his forefathers for fourteen hundred years, an English child speaking the English tongue; teach him from the beginning what that English tongue is, what is its kindred, what is its history. Teach him, here between Mersey and Ribble, here on old Mercian ground, here in old Lichfield diocese, teach him from the beginning to think of the great names of his own stock and his own tongue. Teach him by all means how the Briton once dwelled in the land;

teach him how Ceawlin came up from the south and failed to win the City of the Legions ; teach him how Æthelfrith came from the north and won it, and left it a howling wilderness ; teach him, if you will, the song of the monks of Bangor ; but teach him too how the Lady of the Mercians came once more from the south to rear her burgh at Runcorn and to make the howling wilderness on the Wirhael again a city of men. Teach him that, if his own town cannot boast of the hoary greatness of York and Lincoln and Exeter and Colchester, he at least belongs to the realm of Penda and the fold of Ceadda ; teach him that he has his share in the greatness of Offa and of Æthelbald, in the milder fame of Leofric and Godgifu ; teach him that those two last-named worthies are something more than the subjects of a silly tale at Coventry ; teach him that they are the rightful possessions of the whole Mercian earldom, of the land whose city by the Dee beheld the proudest pomp of English Imperial rule, and which was the last of English cities to shut its gates and man its walls in the teeth of the invading Norman. Teach all this from the very beginning ; believe me that it is far easier to teach, far easier to learn, than confused stuff about Romans and Saxons and the English people who were then called the Britons. Teach them that Englishmen are Englishmen, that Mid-England is Mid-England ; and in this work you will find no small help from Dr. Morris, the best expounder of the English tongue. If I were standing anywhere else, I would add that you might also find no small help in a quarter not far from your own gates. But I doubt whether you will get much help from the Student's Hume, from Morell and M'Leod, and Angus, or from the Roman, Saxon, Norman, and Plantagenet periods, as studied by the lower third form.

Let me now ask you to follow me beyond our own island. The old controversy about Latin and Greek is raging again. I dare say the question has been raised in Liverpool as well as in other places. Not long ago I read a paper by an Oxford professor, Mr. Bonamy Price, in which he argued for keeping Greek and Latin, because they were dead languages, and because dead languages were the best for purposes of education. Now Mr. Price has taught school-boys, and I never have ; but, by the light of nature I should say, Don't teach dead languages, but living ones. Don't teach languages which are really dead, like the languages which our Eastern scholars find in the inscriptions at Nineveh and Babylon. Such languages are not matters for education, though they are most fitting matters of research for those scholars whose tastes lead them that way. But teach living languages, and at the head of them teach those pre-eminently living languages, the tongue of Greece and the tongue of Rome. Let us never hear the word "ancient," the word "classical," or any other of those foolish terms of separation which tend to make men look on the most living of tongues, the most living of histories, as though they were dead. It is because teachers of them have insisted on dealing with the living as if they were dead that the world has been not unnaturally led to look upon them as if they were. Now when I look through your programme of studies, except in the lucky forms which read the General Sketch of European History, I see no provision for the systematic teaching of history ; I see no provision for teaching any history except that of England. I see provisions for learning Latin and for learning French ; I see no provision for learning Latin and French as parts of the same thing. I suspect that there are not many schools in which I should see

what I want ; but I certainly do not see it here. Now I say, Break down the middle wall of partition which is against us ; let the living shake off their cerecloths and come forth from their tombs, and show that they are living indeed. There is still life in the old Imperial tongue, not the mere tongue of a few imitative poets, materials for stock allusions and easy quotations, but the undying tongue of the Cæsars and the Pontiffs, the tongue of the history, the law, the theology, and half the literature of Western Europe, the tongue of Fathers and Councils, the tongue of the Code and the Decretals, the tongue of Domesday and the Great Charter, the tongue which is still the tongue of worship of half Christendom, the tongue which still lives on in its written and spoken daughter tongues, from the mouth of the Tagus to the mouth of the Danube, in the great capitals on the Tiber and the Seine, as well as in the innermost nooks of the Alpine dales, on the heights of Pindos and on the plains of the Aluta and the Dniester. Tell me not of “living” and “dead,” of “ancient” and “modern.” You learn Latin ; you learn French. Part not asunder what nature and history have joined together. You cannot worthily learn Latin without French ; you cannot worthily learn French without Latin. You know not your Latin worthily unless you know whither it goes ; you know not your French worthily unless you know whence it comes. Stick then to your Latin ; learn your Latin, but learn it rightly ; don’t waste your time in making Latin verses ; but learn what the Latin tongue is and what it has done in the world. And if the tongue of Rome be yet living, what shall I say of the tongue of Greece ? Is the tongue dead which has lived on through so many ages of greatness, of bondage, of renewed greatness and renewed

bondage, the tongue of that unchanging Church which can alone give to her children the New Testament as evangelists and apostles wrote it, the tongue of that long-abiding and now fresh-born people whom no artificial barriers shall much longer keep back from the glorious home of their faith and nation. Is the tongue of Homer and of Aristotle dead when it lives on in the tongue of Paul and of John Chrysostom, the tongue of Prokopios and Eustathios, the tongue of Rhêgas, of Koraês, and of Trikoupês? You may try hard to make it dead in your class-rooms and lecture-rooms, by arbitrarily picking out two or three centuries of its long history, and by disguising its native sound by a hideous pronunciation which makes the Hellenic tongue itself sound barbarous in every Hellenic ear. By such means you may persuade yourselves that it is dead; but it is living all the same. The Greek tongue is indeed a living thing to those with whom it is not a matter of words and names and things that have passed away, but who have heard it and have spoken it among its own hills and its own islands. Stick to your Greek, learn your Greek; but learn it as the tongue of a people which indeed has a mighty past, but which also, by the confession of its worst enemy, has a future. Learn your Greek, but learn to sound it so that a Greek may understand you. The work is not hard; I have found it no great task to unlearn our ugly school pronunciation; it must be a lighter task still never to learn it. You do not go to Paris and insult the ear of a Frenchman by talking of *rowlezz-rowce* and *donnezz moy*. Why go to Athens, and either stand dumb for lack of utterance, or else insult Greek ears by sounds which are to them as hideous as *rowlezz-rowce* and *donnezz-moy* would be to a Frenchman? No one who has received the cheers—aye,

and the kisses—of a Greek audience spoken to in their own tongue, will go back to wallow in the mire with the wretched *tow-tow* and *bow-wow* which our schoolmasters rubbed into us, when they hardly knew that there was a living Greece within the bounds of Europe.

Learn then, as the moral of all, that the study of history is one, that the study of language is one, that neither can be learned as it should be learned till the pitiful and flimsy distinctions of “ancient” and “modern” are swept away, till you look facts in the face, and grasp the truth that the history of European man is a single tale, whole and undivisible. I could go on with this theory at much greater length; I have gone on with it often at much greater length. It is enough perhaps if I can this evening set both learners and teachers a-thinking. But it might be well if thinking led to action, and I can conceive no more fitting action to wind up this day’s work than to let the last act of the drama take the shape of a whole burnt-offering of the Student’s Hume.*

* I hear that something like this good work has been done already. The Student’s Hume is gone; but it is still in the printed programme. I can only ask again, Why should the programme hide the Institute’s light under a bushel?